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Our Lady of the Gulf

1847
1997

CATHOLIC CHURCH

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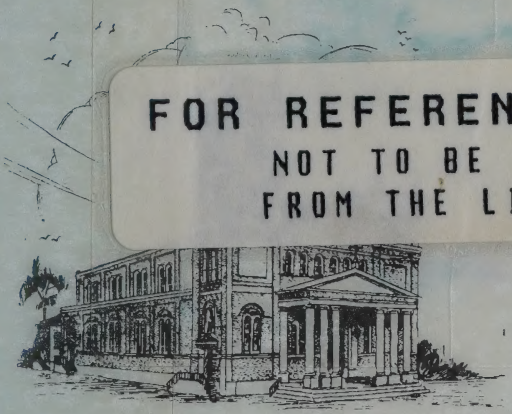

A Tradition of
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Beach Boulevard • Bay St. Louis, Mississippi

Dedicated to

The Most Reverend Joseph L. Howze,

Bishop of Biloxi,

and to all the priests,

religious and laity

who have served

Our Lady of the Gulf Parish

throughout its existence.

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We acknowledge with appreciation
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An Introductory Message

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The occasion of our sesquicentennial as a parish is an opportunity to celebrate giving praise to God for the blessings we share at Our Lady of the Gulf. Thanks to lived fidelity and generosity, we inherit a tradition of faith that has endured since 1847. In celebrating an occasion like this, we naturally look back at our history and in so doing, we see the present in a broader context and we even get a peek into what the future may hold.

Although our Catholic theology says "we are the church," most people see that the priest more than others incarnates the church, and the authors of our history in chronicling the lives of our parish's 14 pastors show a continuous thread of the spirit's work in our local community through times of war and peace, depression and prosperity, calm and storm.

While newcomers can pick up this faith story of 150 years and be enriched, their perspective will be somewhat like viewing our church building from the outside. When one goes inside the building and looks at the sun shining through the stained glass, the view is much richer. To have known or been a part of the many dedicated priests, brothers, sisters and unsung parishioners who invested their lives, their time, their money accomplishing so much in often difficult curcumstances is testament to what grace and nature can do to reflect the beauty of God. As the sun reflects the beauty of the stained glass, the more invested we are or have been, the more we reflect the Son fully alive and the more we have cause for pride and gratitude on this occasion of celebration.

If the past 150 years had a great common enemy against which our community struggled, it was ignorance; thus from the earliest days to the present, education was central to parish life. The early parish leaders from Paris, Lyon and Bourg were themselves part of a church and culture that experienced seismic shifts after the French Revolution. They knew that education led to freedom and opportunity, and if we today can brag about our schools, our enlightenment and progress in education, let us not forget we see farther only because we stand on the shoulders of great men and women who are a part of our past. The buildings, the institutions we inherit are expressions of their human faith, their aspirations, their desire and need to celebrate, to ritualize, to connect with one another and with their God. They taught one another to read, write and sing. They converted, consoled, healed, buried. They did Christ's work by the grace of God for 150 years. Yet we dare not canonize our spiritual ancestors or present parishioners. We are a parish with a human face and sometimes we can be as small as the next person. The Frenchman DeLuback could say of us as he said of his own parish, "I am told she is holy yet I see her full of sinners; I am told her mission is to tear men and women away from earthly cares and remind them of their eternal vocation, yet I see them constantly preoccupied with things of the earth and of time as if she wished us to live here forever."

From a picture on one of the church's windows, "Our Lady of the Gulf" donated by the Children of Mary, we can see the church building and its towers remain unfinished. Indeed since our beginnings, because of the ravages of storms, fire and time, buildings have had to be rebuilt or restored many times; so too our lives, our relationships with one another and with God remain unfinished and beckon us to reform, to renewal, to repentance and to resolution as we move towards our next milestone in a new millennium.

As we look ahead, I confess I am not competent to predict what the future may hold for us as a parish. But if our marriages, our families, our careers, our schools, our clergy, our neighbors are perfect, we will have arrived at a place or state of mind far removed from

Bay St. Louis. In truth we will need to continue to grow as a community of faith, love and compassion modeled on the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ.

Even though the future is clouded from our vision, I am confident that if we stay close to that gracious Lady (of the Woods, the Academy or the Gulf), who overshadows us and all our activities, we, like the Blessed Mother, will become more worthy bearers of Christ, surprising His people with a future beyond our imagination.

Rev. Peter Mockler, Pastor

The First Fifty Years

As we proudly celebrate the one hundred and fifty years of our Catholic heritage in this parish, we recognize Our Lady of the Gulf as the oldest Catholic church in Hancock County, the third oldest on the Mississippi Gulf Coast and the fifth oldest parish in the state of Mississippi.

Although pioneer Catholic families of the Bay/Waveland area had not been completely without the ministry of priests from the time of d'Iberville's landing in 1699, they had been dependent on visiting priests, mainly from Mobile, New Orleans and Natchez. It was not until July 31, 1847 that Bishop Chance of Natchez appointed Rev. Louis Stanislaus Buteux first pastor of a parish that would include Pass Christian, the Pearl River, Jourdan River and Wolf River communities and all territory extending 20 to 25 miles to the north. Considering the area served by Our Lady of the Gulf Parish today, one can only marvel at the magnitude of Father Buteux's assignment.

Father Buteux, who had been ordained in Paris in 1836, arrived in Bay St. Louis, then known as Shieldsboro, on August 8, 1847 after a two-to-three day trip by water from New Orleans, staying at the Grand Hotel in Bay St. Louis (going rate for hotels at the time, $35 a month, which most likely included meals) as he immediately began work securing property for a church and rectory.

One week after his arrival in Bay St. Louis, Father Buteux celebrated his first Mass in the courthouse, at that time located in Gainesville. Until the church and rectory were built, he celebrated Mass at the courthouse or in private homes in Gainesville, Logtown and Pearlington, which were thriving sawmill towns, as well as in Kiln, Waveland and Bay St. Louis.

Deed for the property where the church and rectory now stand arrived September 15, 1847 and on March 26, 1848 Bishop Odin of

Galveston blessed the cornerstone of the church. On August 19, 1849 Bishop John Chance, first bishop of Natchez, blessed the church and that evening Bishop Blanc of New Orleans blessed the bells named at that time Mary and Joseph.

Father Buteux, who had labored in Indiana educating and ministering to native Americans and who had been chaplain for what is now St. Mary of the Woods in Terre Haute, Indiana, saw the need for education of the youth in Bay St. Louis. In 1852 he obtained from C. F. Facile, visiteur of Christian Brothers in New Orleans, permission for the brothers to staff a school in the parish. The school opened mainly for the boys of Bay St. Louis, but a few boarders from New Orleans were housed in the rectory. While this may be considered the first boarding school for boys in the diocese of Natchez, it was short-lived. In 1853 the yellow fever epidemic forced the closure of the school. Many brothers died during the epidemic which took the lives of 100 people a day in New Orleans alone.

Determined to establish Catholic schools for the youth of his parish, Father Buteux in June of 1854 sought and received the help of three Brothers of the Sacred Heart, then stationed in Mobile. In August of the same year, he received permission from the Brothers of the Sacred Heart in France to open a boarding school for boys in Bay St. Louis.

St. Stanislaus College, named after Father Buteux's patron saint, is very much a part of Our Lady of the Gulf Parish. Under the administration and direction of the Brothers of the Sacred Heart, St. Stanislaus has enjoyed outstanding cooperation and friendship with Our Lady of the Gulf. In school year 1996-97, for example, students from St. Stanislaus took classes in computer science, Latin, psychology, selected courses in English, math and music taught by the faculty of Our Lady Academy. Girls from the academy were enrolled in band, drama, French and art at St. Stanislaus.

Father Buteux was also instrumental in having the Sisters of St. Joseph of Bourg in France come to Bay St. Louis to staff a school

for girls. St. Joseph Academy next to the church was the first house in the United States of the Sisters of St. Joseph of Bourg. The three sisters under the leadership of Mother Eulalia arrived in Bay St. Louis January 6, 1855 and began the foundation for St. Joseph Academy. Their first school was one room that served as classroom, dining room and kitchen. In 1856, Mother St. Claude, **Mother General in France,** sent three additional sisters to help in the arduous work of teaching, caring for the sick and aiding the poor. In 1857 five more sisters arrived to supplement the overworked staff. The Civil War years were difficult and dark years for the sisters who suffered many privations even though they were under the protection of the French flag which flew over their home. Undaunted by privations, they continued their efforts. By 1866 the academy had as many as 45 boarders, and in 1871 the school was chartered by the Mississippi Legislature.

Father Buteux's health necessitated a trip to France for rest in 1857. On his return in 1858, his ship encountered a life-threatening storm. It was doubtful if anyone would survive the terrible winds, the high seas and the constant battering of the ship. Father Buteux prayed, pouring out his heart for the intercession of the Virgin Mary in those perilous moments. When the ship finally reached safe harbor, this first pastor of Our Lady of the Gulf felt that the Blessed Virgin had answered his prayers and he vowed special tribute to her. Later, an unidentified parishioner in dire circumstances sought the intercession of Mary. His prayers answered, he erected the shrine we now know as the Shrine of Our Lady of the Woods. When a statue of the Blessed Virgin arrived from France, it was lovingly carried to its place where it has withstood the ravages of hurricanes, fire and time. A reenactment of the arrival of Father Buteux in Bay St. Louis will take place on Saturday, August 16 as part of the sesquicentennial celebration. When Father Buteux left Bay St. Louis, he went to Boston where he worked with the poor of the city and as a hospital chaplain. Particu-

larly fond of children, he also spent much time ministering to the forsaken children in orphanages. After a lingering illness, Father Buteux died in Boston on June 14, 1875 at 67 years of age.

Father Henry LeDuc, also a native of France, came to Bay St. Louis on his first and only assignment, faithfully serving his ever-growing parish from 1859 to 1897. This beloved and energetic pastor built six churches including those at Cedar Point, Bayou LaCroix, Bayou Cadet, and at Waveland. He also rebuilt Our Lady of the Gulf which had been condemned by the architects because of deterioration of the wooden foundation.

Bishop Gerow, seventh bishop of the Diocese of Natchez, writes in his book Catholicity in Mississippi that in the spring of 1864 a severe altercation between Federal and Confederate troops occurred at the corner of Front (now Beach) and Union streets where a federal soldier shot the Confederate Captain Marshal. Father LeDuc prevented the soldier from using his bayonet to ensure Captain Marshal's death. So enraged were the Federals that they began burning several properties, determined to destroy the entire town. On a street near the church, the young priest held high the cross directly before the approaching troops, many of whom were Irish Catholics. In respect to the cross they stopped their attack.

This was not the only courageous act of Father LeDuc during the war. Using a small boat, he managed to slip through the blockade to reach New Orleans for sorely needed provisions. Although St. Stanislaus College and the Convent of the Sisters of St. Joseph flew the French flag during the Civil War, they suffered the same privations as the rest of the community. On his last trip, Father LeDuc was captured for a brief period. Although released, his captors kept his boat.

After the war in 1868, Father LeDuc started the first private Negro school. Up until that time the Sisters of St. Joseph had taught small numbers of black children. In later years the school came under the direction of St. Rose of Lima Church. Also in 1868, St. Rose held

its first parish fair, raising $1,200.

Father LeDuc purchased the tower clock for the church belfry in 1880, collecting $800 in only a few weeks. The clock would play an important part in the later history of the church.

An important part of Father LeDuc's pastorate was the building of St. Joseph's Chapel in 1896. The first Mass was celebrated on the feast of St. Joseph, March 19, 1896, with the blessing of the bells two days later. The chapel was built on land donated from a part of the Cowand plantation. Many who lived in this part of the community were laborers and oystermen who worked in the nearby cannery and had no means of transportation. After the chapel was built, Father came each Sunday affording these parishioners the privilege of hearing Mass in their own chapel at least once a week.

Pere LeDuc's death on August 27, 1897 resulted from an injury to the leg as he was returning to his native France. He was buried in France far from the St. Mary's Cemetery he had opened in 1872 for his beloved parish. He is remembered for his missionary zeal as he guided his people in their spiritual growth, ministering at one time to thirteen different missions in addition to Our Lady of the Gulf.

From January 1, 1898 to June 14, 1903, the Very Rev. J. Blanc served as pastor. Born in France in 1842, he completed his seminary training in 1870 and was ordained for the Diocese of Natchez. For ten years Father Blanc labored in the pioneer missions of northeast Mississippi close to the Alabama line. This was strictly missionary work as there were few Catholics in that part of the state. Father Blanc must have welcomed his assignment as pastor at Pass Christian from 1880-1890 and at Biloxi from 1890-1898 where he would find established Catholic churches. Knowing of Father Blanc's spiritual dedication as well as of his reputation as a great builder and financier, before his death Pere LeDuc had requested that Father Blanc succeed him and Bishop Heslin agreed.

The high regard in which his parishioners held Father Blanc is

evident in the resolution which they presented to the Board of Aldermen and county officials asking businesses to close during his funeral. One statement from that resolution tells us much of this remarkable man: "May the bright and shining example of his gentle character, his charities, his consistent life as a priest and as a man be ever before us and be emulated by others." That his funeral was the largest anyone in Bay St. Louis had ever seen at that time is proof that he was loved and respected by Catholics and non-Catholics. He is buried under the Calvary in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Into the Twentieth Century

As Father Aloise Van Waesberghe began his pastorate at Our Lady of the Gulf on July 1, 1903, his congregation was a growing one. In 1847, only three marriages were recorded: Henry Saucier to Victoria Toulme, D.W. Johnston to Henrietta Monet, and Francis Casanova to Adele Toulme. Records of 1902, the year previous to Father Waesberghe's arrival, show twenty marriages and ninety-seven baptisms, not all of infants but some of older children and even on occasion of adults.

Bay St. Louis, Waveland, and Pass Christian were fast becoming favored vacation spots mainly for New Orleanians, many of whom were French Catholics. In the early 1900s as these vacationers arrived, the population of Bay St. Louis grew from its normal 1,200 to 10,000 in the summer months. The L&N Railroad then in operation brought entire families on its daily run from New Orleans. Men of these families often commuted to their places of business in the city while their families remained on the Coast. With the addition of these to his hard-working local congregation of merchants, professionals, truck farmers, laborers, fishermen and oystermen, Father Waesberghe had his work cut out for him.

Before coming to Our Lady of the Gulf, Father Aloise, born and ordained in Belgium, had done missionary work in Hancock and Harrison counties as well as in other parts of the state and had been pastor at Pass Christian from 1896 to 1903. Because his spiritual work deserved commendation, he was made an honorary canon and dean on the Mississippi Coast, an honor previously bestowed on Fathers LeDuc and Blanc. Father Aloise's last assignment was a brief one. His untimely death in 1906 at fifty years of age ended his busy three years at Our Lady of the Gulf where he had overseen the schools begun by Father Buteux and where he had administered to the many missions in his territory including what would become the parishes of St. Clare and of St. Rose of Lima.

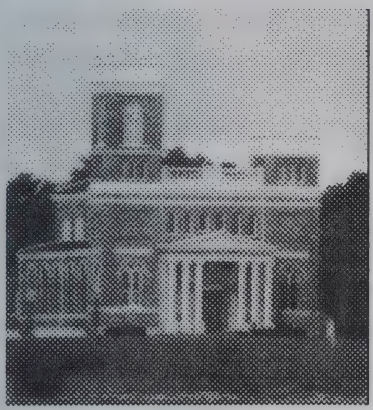
Father John M. Prendergast, a former assistant at Our Lady of the Gulf in 1900, succeeded Father Waesberghe on June 23, 1906. Father Prendergast, born in Natchez and educated in Maryland, Louisiana and Switzerland, was the first native priest of the diocese. To quote from an early Sea Coast Echo article, he was "a gentleman, scholar, and theologian of deep thought."

Father Prendergast faced perhaps the most heart-rending event of his priestly career when, on the morning of November 16, 1907, he viewed the complete destruction by fire of Our Lady of the Gulf church and rectory, the convent and school of the St. Joseph nuns, and homes and businesses along the beach front. The church bells used mainly to call the faithful to worship were also used to announce important events in the community. Ironically, on the night of the fire, the rope attached to the bells had been inadvertently locked in the bell tower. It is doubtful, though, that the fire could have been controlled even with the warning of the bells. Fire-fighting equipment at the time was poor, and the fire, which had started at John Osinach's Bay Mercantile Co and Opera House quickly spread to the surrounding, mostly wooden structures. At 7:30 a.m. on the morning of the fire, the clock which struck on the hour and half hour struck for the last time as the steeple of the church fell.

Ruins of CATHOLIC CHURCH, "OUR LADY OF THE GULF", erected in 1850. Destroyed by fire Nov. 16th, 1907. Bay St. Louis, Miss.

Dismayed but undaunted, Father Prendergast gathered his flock about him for Mass the following Sunday at St. Stanislaus. With steadfast faith and hope in the future, planning began for replacement of church, rectory, convent and school. Insurance collected after the fire was $12,000 on the church and $1,500 on the rectory. The Sisters collected $10,200 on their buildings. Dedicated missionaries that they were, the Sisters rented the old Von Gorren home on North Beach Boulevard to continue their work of the past fifty-three years until new facilities could be built.

On October 4, 1908, Bishop Thomas Heslin laid the cornerstone for the new church, and on December 13, 1908, a little over a year after the fire, Father Prendergast celebrated his first Mass in the new church on the same day as the initiation of the Knights of Columbus in Bay St. Louis. This chapter of the Knights bears the name of the beloved Pere LeDuc, second pastor of Our Lady of the Gulf.



Joseph Mauffray, Joseph Cazeneuv, and Hugo Hoffman were instrumental in obtaining bells for the new church from the New Orleans Cotton Exchange. The bells were blessed as Hugo, the smaller of the two, and Joseph, the larger bell. These are the bells we hear each day. They will ring out joyously for the celebration of the sesquicentennial.

Also in 1908, St. Joseph Academy moved into larger buildings replacing those destroyed in the fire. The academy, both a boarding and day school, taught girls from the first through the twelfth grade and boys from the first through the third grade, the boys then transferring to St. Stanislaus. The Sisters at this time also maintained a school for colored children.

In 1910, Father Prendergast built the St. Henry church in Edwardsville, a community for the personnel of the Edwards Saw Mill. In 1927, St. Henry was placed under St. Clare's parish. Later in the century, St. Henry joined with Holy Cross Church in the Bayou LaCroix community. Father Prendergast also dedicated churches at Clermont Harbor and Lakeshore. Our Lady of the Gulf has indeed been the mother church of Catholic churches in Hancock County.

Father Prendergast had endeared himself to the Bay St. Louis community in general and to his parish in particular. The parish had flourished under his guidance. He sacrificed much of himself in ser-

vice to others and undoubtedly often led his congregation in special prayers for those serving in World War I.

Father Andrew Gmelch succeeded Father Prendergast becoming pastor at Bay St. Louis on January 17, 1918. Born in Germany, Father Gmelch studied under the Benedictines in Cullman, Alabama, and completed his ecclesiastical studies in New Orleans where he was ordained in 1901. Prior to coming to Our Lady of the Gulf, Father Gmelch had labored in the Mississippi Delta towns of Clarksdale and Merigold and also in Vicksburg and Canton.

Soon after becoming pastor, Father Gmelch saw the need for Waveland and its mission to be independent of Our Lady of the Gulf. He proposed Waveland as a separate parish; Bishop Gerow approved and on July 1, 1919 appointed Father M.J. Costello, then an assistant at Our Lady of the Gulf, as first pastor of St. Clare's church in Waveland.

Long a friend of the Divine Word (S.V.D.) Fathers, Father Gmelch approached them in 1921 to take charge of the St. Rose school for colored children taught by the Sisters of St. Joseph since 1885. In 1922 Father Christmann of the Divine Word Fathers bought property in Bay St. Louis for the future St. Augustine's Seminary and that same year became acting principal of the St. Rose school. The following year when the Mission House for the Colored was moved from Greenville to Bay St. Louis, Father F.X. Baltes, S.V.D., who had taught at the Mission House, became head of the school. In 1924, the first four Missionary Sisters, Servants of the Holy Spirit, relieved the Sisters of St. Joseph and taught there until the closing of the school. Realizing that the black population needed a church larger than the small school chapel, Bishop Gerow declared St. Rose of Lima Mission independent of Our Lady of the Gulf and on November 14, 1926 dedicated St. Rose of Lima as a parish church with Father Baltes as its first pastor.

Father Gmelch, an able business manager as well as spiritual director, solicited about $30,000 to furnish the interior of the church.

To him we owe a debt of gratitude for making Our Lady of the Gulf one of the most beautiful churches in the area. The focal point of any Catholic church is, of course, the altar, and the high altar at Our Lady of the Gulf is particularly impressive. Built of Italian Carrerra marble, the altar commemorates the first centennial of the parish. Centered on the front of the altar is the symbolic figure of the pelican. Popular fancy once considered the red tip of the beak of the pelican as evidence of the bird's ripping open its own breast to feed its young, hence a symbolism of the church nourishing the faithful. A higher, ancient symbolism and a more commonly accepted one today is that the pelican is a symbol of the Holy Eucharist. The use of the symbolic pelican is particularly appropriate here on the Coast where these large birds can often be seen skimming gracefully over the surface of the water.

Over the high altar is a dome with a large painting of Mary as Our Lady of the Gulf to whom the church is dedicated. The background is a restful shade of blue, the color associated with the Virgin. In the painting she is robed in a deeper shade of blue and holds in her arms the Christ child. Angels surround and hover over the pair. In the foreground, sailing ships like those that first approached these shores in the seventeenth century ply the blue-green waters of the Gulf. Almost touching the ceiling on the right of the dome is another depiction of the symbolic pelican. Interestingly juxtapositioned on the left is the sacrificial Lamb of God.

The exquisite stained glass windows done by Mayer and Company in Munich, Germany at the cost of $14,000 could not be duplicated today for many times that amount. Each window depicts an

event in the lives of Jesus, Mary and Joseph from the Annunciation to the Resurrection of Christ. One account states that not only were the windows intended for meditation and for the lifting of the spirit but for the very practical point of instruction for those who could not read.

Although not comparable in value to the marble altars and statues, the plaster stations of the cross are an excellent example of three-dimensional art. They were erected in the early 1920s for $1,400.

Father Gmelch's thirty-seven years at Our Lady of the Gulf were eventful ones encompassing as they did the centennial of the church, the hurricane of 1947, and the years of World War II. Asked for a memory of Father Gmelch, a lifelong parishioner recently said that her fondest memories of Father Gmelch are of his love for children and of his presiding over the May crowning of the statue of the Blessed Virgin each year. The church, she said, was always filled on this occasion, with every pew occupied.

Father Gmelch died May 15, 1955, at seventy-seven years of age at Hotel Dieu in New Orleans. He lies at rest in St. Mary's Cemetery.

Latter Part of the Twentieth Century

When Pope John XXIII convened Vatican Council II in the early 1960s remarking that it was time to open the window to let in a little fresh air, many Catholics were dubious about any change in the Church. Vatican II made no change in basic Catholic doctrine or dogma or traditional beliefs, still there were those who questioned the changes in the way congregations would worship, the emphasis on individual responsibility, the ecumenical movement, and the more active role of the laity in the Church. Some felt the window should not have been opened even an inch; others believed it should have been flung wide. An amusing incident occurred at the Catholic Book Store in New Orleans as English was replacing the traditional Latin in the Mass.

Two regular store patrons were arguing vehemently, one in favor of the vernacular, the other supporting the traditional Latin. A bystander nearby listened attentively to the argument. At one point, those arguing turned to the man listening and almost shouted to him, "Well, what do you think? Latin or English?" The man, taken aback and visibly embarrassed, stammered, "Er...I...I don't know. I'm a Baptist!"

When Father Michael McCarthy began his assignment at Our Lady of the Gulf on June 1, 1955, priests still said Mass in Latin, their backs to the congregation. Subsequently, after Vatican II, priests would face the congregation saying Mass in the native language of the country they were serving, lay readers would read the epistle, deacons would assist in duties previously performed by priests, altar girls would join altar boys in serving at Mass, Catholics long depen-

dent on a choir would reluctantly and timidly join in congregational singing and the laity would assume a greater role in traditional worship, including the distribution of the Holy Eucharist at Mass.

Father McCarthy anticipated some of the directives of Vatican II when he met with Bishop Van Bekkom of Indonesia at St. Augustine Seminary on January 4, 1957. Bishop Van Bekkom saw in Indonesia, the fourth most populated country in the world with the largest Muslim concentration on the globe, a shortage of priests and the urgent need for greater participation of the laity in the life of the Church. A front page article and picture in the local Sea Coast Echo depicts the two prelates in earnest dialogue discussing this very issue: the need for help from the laity if priests were to give the spiritual guidance and leadership expected of them.

In his three years at Our Lady of the Gulf, Father McCarthy renewed and enlarged three mission churches in his jurisdiction, encouraging participation of the laity. Father McCarthy, later Monsignor McCarthy, left Our Lady of the Gulf September 5, 1958.

Although Monsignor Martin Maloney was appointed eighth pastor of Our Lady of the Gulf on June 19, 1958, he did not officially begin his duties until September 5, 1958, serving until June 8, 1962. Monsignor Maloney was born in County Galway, Ireland and attended St. Patrick's College, Carlow, where he was ordained June 15, 1930 for service in Mississippi. Before coming to Bay St. Louis, Monsignor Maloney had served churches in Biloxi, Vicksburg and Greenville.

At St. Joseph's in Greenville, Monsignor Maloney built up his parish as he established the Confraternity of the Blessed Sacrament, instituted monthly, night adoration, and brought thirty-three converts into his congregation. He also administered the Mission House for the Colored. It was at St. Joseph's that Bishop Gerow invested Father Maloney as Monsignor.

On arriving at Our Lady of the Gulf, Monsignor Maloney placed construction of a new elementary school as a top priority. Fund-

raising efforts began in 1959 under the chairmanship of E. M. Brignac, Jr. The drive stressed the pressing need for more classrooms and a cafeteria. Success crowned the efforts of the campaign for funds, and in the fall of 1960 Our Lady of the Gulf school opened for students in grades one through six. Eventually, a kindergarten was added. The school, built for $250,000, included thirteen classrooms and the much needed cafeteria. It was staffed by lay teachers and by the Sisters of St. Joseph who left in 1976.

Seriously ill, Monsignor Maloney returned to Ireland where he died in 1962.

Following Monsignor Maloney's death, Monsignor James Hannon was assigned as pastor of Our Lady of the Gulf on June 8, 1962 serving until July 1, 1969. Monsignor Hannon was also born in County Galway, Ireland, and attended St. Patrick's College, Carlow, where he was ordained for the Diocese of Natchez. By 1977, the diocese had grown so large that it was separated into the Jackson and Biloxi dioceses; thus it was that Monsignor Hannon served under three bishops — Bishops Gerow, Brunini and Howze — and at the same time under six popes, as did Father John O'Brien and Monsignor Gregory Johnson.

Before coming to Bay St. Louis, Monsignor Hannon had been assistant pastor at Nativity Parish in Biloxi in March 1946, and later that year had been assigned as assistant at Our Lady of Victories in Pascagoula. The following year he studied Canon law at Catholic University of America. Among offices Monsignor Hannon has held are those of Diocesan Director of the Society for the Propagation of the Faith and Diocesan Director of the Legion of Decency. He was named a papal chamberlain by the Holy See in 1954 and was appointed Vicar General during the absence of bishops in 1962 and 1964.

In 1967 Monsignor Hannon sadly witnessed the closing of St. Joseph's Academy after its one hundred and twelve years of Catholic education in the community. The seniors who graduated in 1967 were torn between sadness and the usual elation of a high school graduating class. The juniors were completely devastated as they

realized that even though they had received class rings, they would not be graduating from St. Joseph's the following year. One parishioner who was a junior at the time remembers that she and many of her classmates had mothers and grandmothers who attended the academy their entire school lives. Their daughters could hardly believe they would be graduating from a new and strange school the next year.

After leaving Our Lady of the Gulf, Monsignor Hannon became pastor of Our Lady of Victories Parish in Pascagoula. During the 1970s he was appointed and reappointed Dean of the East Coast Deanery. In 1980 he was assigned as pastor of St. Alphonsus Parish in Ocean Springs.

Retired since 1989, Monsignor Hannon remains active in Habitat for Humanity, in his woodworking hobby donating toys he creates to needy children, and helping St. Thomas Parish in Long Beach. He offers daily Mass at the Samaritan House retirement home in Ocean Springs.

Monsignor Gregory Johnson's first assignment was to Nativity Parish in Biloxi where witnessing the aftermath of the 1947 hurricane gave him valuable insight into the ordeal he would face in 1969 when Camille, the most devastating of hurricanes, struck the coast. From Nativity Parish Monsignor Johnson went to Our Lady of Victories in Pascagoula, laboring for five years not only in the mother parish but also in the missions of Lucedale, Hurley and Gautier. During these years he brought forty-five converts into the faith.

Study at Catholic University enabled Monsignor Johnson to earn a master's degree in history to satisfy Mississippi requirements for teaching.

As an assistant at Sacred Heart in Hattiesburg, Monsignor Johnson ministered to the students at the University of Southern Mississippi where he established the university's first Newman Center. Later, in Jackson, he became principal of the interparochial St. Joseph's

High School and also assisted Monsignor Chatham at St. Richard's Parish in northeast Jackson.

Before coming to Our Lady of the Gulf in 1969, Monsignor Johnson had also served in Yazoo City, Lizana and Moss Point, working in missions as well as the mother parishes.

Monsignor Johnson had barely settled in at Bay St. Louis when tragedy struck on August 17, 1969 as the winds and waters of hurricane Camille swept the coast wreaking havoc on every city and town along the Mississippi shores and even for miles inland. The elementary school on the parish grounds had its own generator making it possible to maintain freezers of food. Blossman Gas Company provided tanks of propane for cooking. The Navy had sent a Search and Rescue team to aid victims of the storm. Monsignor Johnson worked closely with these men and recalls feeding as many as 3,800 people. Church, school, rectory and St. Joseph's Chapel suffered some damage, but the parish was blessed that not one of the buildings was completely destroyed as were many of the surrounding homes and businesses.

Seeing the need in the parish for a girls' Catholic high school, soon after the storm Monsignor Johnson laid plans for the opening of Our Lady Academy. In 1971 the academy opened with grades seven through nine in the St. Joseph Academy gymnasium complex and annex (St. Joseph Hall) and in a new brick structure, Johnson Hall. Monsignor Johnson served as first principal. A grade was added each year and in 1975 Our Lady Academy graduated its first senior class.

In the same year the academy opened, the present rectory was built, replacing the wooden structure located at the rear of the church property.

In 1976, the Sisters of St. Joseph, who had continued to staff the elementary school and aid the academy, withdrew. At that time, Our Lady of the Gulf's elementary school merged with St. Rose Elementary School to form an integrated Catholic school with classes

for grades one through three at the St. Rose campus and grades four through six and kindergarten at Our Lady of the Gulf's site. It was not until 1982 that a decision was made to close the St. Rose school and consolidate operations under one roof. At that time, all classes met at the present Bay Catholic Elementary and were taught as they are at present by lay faculty.

Today, Monsignor Johnson, now retired, and Father John O'Brien, also retired, continue to give generously and graciously of their services to the parish. Both have celebrated their golden jubilees at Our Lady of the Gulf.

Father Morgan Kavanagh came to this country with Father Francis Farrell in 1955. He served as chaplain with the Veterans Administration before coming to Our Lady of the Gulf as pastor from June 1, 1978 to October 19, 1979. He returned to service with the Veterans Administration. Now retired, Father Kavanagh resides in Carlow, Ireland.

Father Francis Farrell attended St. Patrick's Seminary in Carlow and was ordained there in June, 1955. His first assignment in Mississippi was as assistant at St. Richard's in Jackson. Following that he served as assistant at St. Paul's in Vicksburg and at St. Mary's Cathedral in Natchez. His first pastorate was at Assumption Parish in Natchez in 1966, leaving there in 1967 to become pastor of Sacred Heart in North Biloxi.

As pastor of Our Lady of the Gulf from April 11, 1980 to April 12, 1985, Father Farrell served the parish well as spiritual leader. At the same time, he was active in diocesan affairs, serving on the Priests' Personnel Board, the Finance Council and the Presbyterial Council, and he was appointed and reappointed Dean of the West Coast Deanery.

Father Farrell's assignment on leaving Our Lady of the Gulf was to Our Lady of Fatima in Biloxi where he has remained. Father Farrell became Monsignor Farrell on July 9, 1989 when Bishop Howze

invested him having received papal documentation for the honor. Today Monsignor Farrell is Chairman of the Diocesan Building and Real Estate Committee.

Monsignor James McGough became pastor of Our Lady of the Gulf on April 12, 1985. Born July 24, 1933, in County Limerick, Ireland, he studied at St. Bernard Seminary in Cullman, Alabama and was ordained by Bishop Gerow on May 25, 1957 at St. Mary's Cathedral in Natchez. His first assignment was as assistant pastor at Nativity Church in Biloxi. Later assignments included pastor at Sacred Heart in Canton, Sacred Heart in Hattiesburg and St. Paul's in Pass Christian.

A brilliant scholar, inspiring speaker and great spiritual leader, Monsignor McGough was highly regarded by his congregation. He was particularly interested in Our Lady Academy and had hoped to expand facilities there. Transferred from Our Lady of the Gulf on February 5, 1988, he became pastor of St. Charles Borromeo in Picayune.

Throughout his priesthood, Monsignor McGough has been active in diocesan affairs. He was Chancellor in 1974, has been Vicar General, has served on the Diocesan Building and Real Estate Committee and was appointed judge on the Presbyterial Council.

Monsignor McGough is now the beloved pastor of St. James Church in Gulfport.

Father Peter Mockler, affectionately known as Father Pete, came to Our Lady of the Gulf on February 5, 1988, having been pastor of St. Ann at Gulfport from 1980 to 1988. Previous assignments were as associate pastor at St. John in Gulfport and as associate at Sacred Heart in Pascagoula.

Born in County Galway, November 4, 1948, Father Pete attended Killyan National School and Summerhill College, Sligo. His seminary training was at St. Patrick's College, Carlow where he was

ordained June 10, 1973. Since ordination he has studied at Loyola University in New Orleans and at the North American College in Rome.

As administrator, Father Pete has expanded the physical plant of the parish, at the same time directing the spiritual life of his congregation. His message is clear, urging parishioners in the words of the weekly bulletin "...to grow as a community of faith, love and compassion, modeled on the ministry and mission of Jesus Christ."

In 1993, Mercy Hall, a new brick building, was dedicated, adding six additional classrooms to Our Lady Academy. At present, the academy, staffed by Religious Sisters of Mercy and lay faculty enrolls approximately 250 students and continues the solid educational program established by St. Joseph Academy in 1855. Our Lady Academy joins Bay Catholic Elementary in an ongoing capital campaign to fund expansion of both schools to include a gymnasium, labs and additional classrooms. Enrollment at Bay Catholic is approximately 360 students for the 1997-98 school year and is projected to increase in the future. The goal of the campaign is to raise $1.7 million dollars for the complete project at both schools. Enrollment at the Catholic schools in Bay St. Louis continues to increase with present enrollment at St. Stanislaus at 590.

When the plans of a developer to build a condominium on the St. Joseph Academy property did not materialize, the parish was able after much negotiation to purchase the property for $350,000. The new state-of-the-art parish hall built on the property was dedicated October 25, 1995. It affords much needed space for parish functions, both religious and social. The hall is available to others on a rental basis for receptions, exhibits and other social or civic events.

Biloxi's television station, WLOX, gave excellent coverage to the thirteenth annual 4th of July Crab Fest in this sesquicentennial year of 1997. The fest drew crowds from all along the coast as well as from neighboring Louisiana and Alabama, and points farther north. The Crab Fest as a fund-raiser and as entertainment is always a great success, but the most satisfying scene at the Crab Fest is that of faith-

ful parishioners who work all year to assure success and who labor cheerfully in the sweltering summer heat, an example to all of their dedication to Our Lady of the Gulf.

Whether officiating at baptisms or weddings, comforting the bereaved at funerals, counseling those with serious problems, or simply listening to those with everyday troubles, Father Pete's personal interest evokes a positive response. When many individuals feel positive about themselves, they build a community of good will. The many active ministries in the parish reflect the care and concern of the pastor for those he seeks to lead spiritually.

In October of 1994, perpetual adoration was initiated at the chapel in the old Matherne residence on Union Street. At present, approximately 100 parishioners attend daily Mass. On Sundays, the four weekend Masses at Our Lady of the Gulf and the two Masses at St. Joseph Chapel accommodate close to 2,000 communicants.

Our Lady of the Gulf has been particularly blessed in having three of its own from Bay St. Louis enter the priesthood: Father Dennis Carver, Father Lacy Green and Bishop Leo Fahey. Also, the Brothers of the Sacred Heart and the Sisters of St. Joseph have welcomed into their orders former members of the parish.

Nowhere is the universality of Catholicism more evident than in the diverse nationalities of pastors, associates and assistants who have served Our Lady of the Gulf throughout these 150 years: French, Belgian, German, the Irish (without whom many Mississippi Catholics would not have had the services of a priest), American, Filipino, Latin American and now Vietnamese.

The parish welcomes Father Anthony Doan Tran as associate to Father Mockler. Just as the window of Vatican II opened to new life in the church, the door of Our Lady of the Gulf opens to a newcomer in our midst, the first Vietnamese priest to serve at Our Lady of the Gulf.

Our Lady of the Gulf Church Pastors

Fr. L. Stanislaus Buteux	1848 - 1860
Fr. Henry LeDuc	1861 - 1898
Fr. F. J. Blanc	1899 - 1903
Fr. Alois Van Waesberghe	1904 - 1906
Fr. J. M. Prendergast	1907 - 1918
Fr. Andrew J. Gmelch	1919 - 1955
Msgr. Michael McCarthy	1955 - 1958
Msgr. Martin Maloney	1958 - 1962
Msgr. James Hannon	1962 - 1969
Msgr. Gregory Johnson	1969 - 1977
Fr. Morgan Kavanagh	1978 - 1979
Fr. Francis Farrell	1980 - 1985
Msgr. James McGough	1985 - 1988
Fr. Peter Mockler	1988 -

Associates

Fr. Alexander DeMorangios
Fr. Theophile Meerschaert
Fr. A. Ketels
Fr. J. McGuire
Fr. J. M. Chauvin
Fr. L. Voyer
Fr. Emile Husser, D. D.
Fr. W. S. Irwin
Fr. A. F. Thuot
Fr. Joseph Kennedy
Fr. E. Boston
Fr. Henry Mortier
Fr. Nelius Downing
Fr. M. Costello
Fr. Joseph F. Barry
Fr. Patrick Carey
Fr. Paul, O.S.B.
Fr. Aloysius Keick
Fr. James P. McGlade
Fr. Thomas J. Hartnett, D. D.
Fr. Geoffrey O'Connell
Fr. Patrick McAlpin
Fr. Leo F. Fahey
Fr. Anthony A. Brown
Fr. John Niemeyer
Fr. William Clarke
Fr. John Martin
Fr. John O'Brien
Fr. Jeremiah Harnett
Fr. Patrick C. Grant
Fr. Hugh Taylor
Fr. Bernard Haddican
Fr. Tom White
Fr. Denis Harlow
Fr. Gerard Cleary
Fr. Richard Summers
Fr. James Reardon
Fr. Michael Kelly
Fr. Kevin Reid
Fr. John Noone
Fr. John Gaspar, S.V.D.
Fr. John Kelly
Fr. David O'Connor
Fr. Daniel Gallagher
Fr. Michael Tracy
Fr. Jack Smith
Fr. George Kitchin
Fr. Louis Lohan
Fr. Patrick Mockler
Fr. Henry McInerny
Fr. Charles C. Venus, Jr.
Fr. Patrick Tierney
Fr. Johnny Planea
Fr. Clement Mathis, S. V. D.
Fr. Gregory M. Barras
Fr. Kenneth Ramon-Landry
Fr. Cuthbert O'Connell
Fr. Anthony Doan Tran

**Note: All names are listed in chronological order and titles appear as they were at the time of assignment.

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